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INR FOR GREG KNIGHT

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SUBJECT: CHINESE SCHOLAR DISCUSSES NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR
ISSUE, SINO-JAPANESE TIES

Classified By: Political External Unit Chief Edgard Kagan. Reasons 1.4
(b/d).

Summary

1. (C) China's good will towards North Korea has been destroyed by the nuclear test and a fundamental change is taking place in Sino-DPRK relations, according to Beijing University Professor Zhu Feng. Noting that his view is in the minority, Zhu said that he believes sanctions against the North Korea will work and represent the only chance left for ensuring the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Since the nuclear test, the PRC leadership has adopted a more "cooperative attitude" towards working with other countries, especially the United States, to ensure that sanctions are effective. The North Korean nuclear test also has presented an opportunity for China and Japan to collaborate on a strategy to deal with the North. According to the Chinese academic, Japanese Prime Minister Abe's trip was largely symbolic and yielded no discernable progress toward resolving long-standing bilateral differences. End Summary.

Zhu: "Sanctions Will Work"

2. (C) During an October 17 meeting with visiting INR Analyst Greg Knight and poloff, Beijing University International Studies Professor Dr. Zhu Feng said Beijing's decision to support UN sanctions against the DPRK was made at the highest level of government, but it is too early to say what economic leverage China will use against North Korea. China is giving serious planning to its responses to Pyongyang's provocations. PRC senior leaders view North Korea as a big threat to China's national security and will not allow Pyongyang to possess nuclear weapons. However, Zhu noted that there is much debate and controversy in the leadership over how to handle North Korea. Zhu stated that contact between the two countries will be sustained and that dialogue will persist because that is the best way to advance Beijing's interests. But Zhu noted that China's good will towards the North Korea has been destroyed by the nuclear test and that fundamental change is taking place in the PRC-DPRK relationship.

3. (C) Zhu believes the UNSC sanctions package against the DPRK is "likely to work," though noting that his is a minority view amongst PRC experts. Zhu claimed that he "pushed his government to make a quick decision to adopt the sanctions because it is the only chance left" for a nuclear free Korean peninsula. He noted that other academics also have recently stepped forward to advise the leadership of the need to send a stronger message to Pyongyang.

4. (C) Calling the North Korean threat "very real and imminent," Zhu said that as a result of the nuclear test, China's leadership now is more resolved to deal with the

crisis. China's position since the test is to step up multilateral cooperation. China's leaders now appear more willing to partner with the United States in pressuring Pyongyang to return to negotiations. China and the United States are facing the same task and must work together to enforce the sanctions, according to Zhu.

DPRK Nuclear Test Opens a Rare Window of Opportunity for Sino-Japanese Cooperation?

15. (C) The North Korea nuclear test also has created an opportunity for China and Japan to collaborate on a strategy that will comprehensively deal with the challenges posed by the North, whether it goes nuclear or collapses. Zhu noted that he returned from Japan on October 15 where he was consulting with Japanese think tanks on a regional response to the North Korean nuclear test. Zhu said that a regional approach towards settling DPRK refugees must be adopted as well as firm cooperation in nation-building if North Korea collapses.

16. (C) Japan nonetheless prefers that the UNSC handle the DPRK nuclear issue because Japan can play a more visible role at the UN than it does in the Six-Party Talks, Zhu claimed. He asserted that Japan remains uncomfortable with the key role that China plays in the Six-Party Talks. This is the reason why Japan sabotages the talks by focusing on the abduction of Japanese citizens to the DPRK, Zhu argued.

Abe Visit Symbolic

17. (C) While the media portrayed Japanese Prime Minister

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Abe's recent visit as a step towards stabilizing Sino-Japanese relations, Zhu contends that the trip was purely symbolic and that the two sides made no significant advances. Abe said nothing new to Beijing officials, was ambiguous on future Yasukuni Shrine visits and made no promises to China on resolving long-standing differences, according to Zhu.

18. (C) Zhu assessed that Abe's popularity is very high in Japan and that most Japanese believe that relations with China should improve. Now that Abe is in office, his trip to Beijing must be viewed in the context of his need to build an image as a capable leader. Zhu was skeptical of Japanese press reports claiming that President Hu Jintao will visit Japan as early as January.

19. (C) The Joint Statement issued by PM Abe and Hu Jintao called for the creation of a joint committee to study history based upon the Japan-South Korea model. The joint committee will be composed of academics and politicians from each country to study the issue of resolving historical issues. Zhu said that he doubted this new committee would make any progress in resolving the outstanding debate on the interpretation of history, noting that the Japan-South Korea committee has made no progress since it was founded five years ago.
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